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Committee for Programme and Coordination

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Agenda item 9

**Adoption of the report of the Committee
on its forty-fifth session**

Draft report

Rapporteur: Abdelatif **Debabeche** (Algeria)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation (item 4 (c))

Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the Millennium Declaration

1. At its 8th and 9th meetings, on 10 and 13 June 2005, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices for poverty eradication in the framework of the Millennium Declaration (E/AC.51/2005/2).
2. The representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and responded to the questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report. A representative of the Regional Commissions New York Office also made a statement.

Discussion

3. The pilot thematic evaluation was welcomed as useful and timely given the upcoming High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005. It was noted that the goal of poverty eradication is of critical significance and an integral part of the work of the United Nations. It was further noted that the report was a good example of how a thematic approach to evaluation could be useful.



4. Several delegations noted that the report provided a helpful and perceptive analysis of linkages between headquarters and field offices. In particular, support was expressed for the conclusions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the complexity of current linkage structures was not conducive to effective and efficient collaboration between headquarters and the field and that, given its multifaceted nature, poverty must be tackled through a comprehensive, multisectoral and coordinated approach. It was also generally agreed that strong linkages were crucial to such an approach.

5. It was also noted that information-sharing among agencies at the headquarters, regional and field levels, as well as between United Nations offices and Member States, was important for effective linkages. In particular, the importance of better informing country offices about the relevant work of agencies with no field presence was stressed.

6. Additionally, the view was expressed that greater inter-agency coordination was needed for stronger linkages. It was pointed out that enhanced collaboration between inter-agency coordinating bodies should also positively influence United Nations country teams and strengthen the resident coordinator system, and that proper intergovernmental oversight was needed for any efforts to enhance coordination among United Nations agencies.

7. Several delegations expressed concern that the report did not adequately address the issue of coordination between Member States and United Nations agencies. The Office of Internal Oversight Services acknowledged the importance of such coordination but clarified that such an assessment was beyond the scope of the evaluation. It was noted that poverty eradication and, specifically, the Millennium Declaration targets were the responsibility of national Governments, and therefore due attention should be given to the role of national Governments as the central stakeholders in headquarters/field linkages. The point was made that synergies between field offices and national Governments should be created, and also that greater cohesion and interaction between the field and national Governments would minimize the risk of duplication and facilitate learning and the promotion of best practices. It was further noted that the United Nations agenda should be harmonized with the needs and priorities of national Governments and that Member States drive their own development process. It was generally agreed that enhanced headquarters/field linkages should ultimately strengthen the capacities of recipient Member States.

8. While broad support was expressed for the recommendations contained in the report, questions were raised about several of the recommendations regarding implementation, resource implications and impact on the work programmes of United Nations agencies.

9. It was suggested that the words "hunger and" be included before the word "poverty" in paragraph 72, recommendation 6 and paragraph 77 (b) of the Office of Internal Oversight Services report.

10. The views were also expressed that priority attention should be given to recommendations 6, 7 and 8, as well as to improving information technology networking between the field and United Nations Headquarters with a view to improving delivery results in the field.

11. With regard to recommendation 3, it was suggested that the United Nations Development Group be requested to develop specific and systemic measures to facilitate access by Member States at the country level to the relevant expertise and technical capacities of the regional commissions and other non-resident agencies, and to facilitate, at the request of the recipient country, the involvement of regional commissions in the preparation of common country assessments and the United Nations development assistance frameworks. In this regard, the regional commissions should also strengthen their cooperation and coordination with the country teams for these purposes, in accordance with paragraph 76 of General Assembly resolution 59/250.

12. Support and appreciation were expressed for the role and activities of the regional commissions. It was stressed that the regional commissions, through their regional perspective and outreach, could play an important role in linking the United Nations efforts for poverty eradication at the global and country levels. The need was reaffirmed for the United Nations system, including through the resident coordinator system, to benefit from the expertise and capacities of the regional commissions and to facilitate access for Member States at the country level to those expertise and technical capacities, in particular on issues with cross-border, subregional and regional dimensions. In this regard, it was emphasized that the perspective of the current United Nations frameworks at the country level should be broadened to incorporate cross-border, subregional and regional issues so as to ensure policy coherence at those levels.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. The Committee recommended approval of recommendations 1 to 9, subject to the provisions set out below.

14. The Committee recommended that the Secretary-General consider appropriate and balanced representation in the working group mentioned in recommendation 1 of the Office of Internal Oversight Services report and, in this context, further recommended that the Secretary-General take steps to enhance inter-agency coordination to fight hunger in the framework of the Millennium Declaration.

15. The Committee noted that the report did not treat in detail the issue of coordination between United Nations bodies and national Governments, which is of crucial importance in field activities. It emphasized that in order to strengthen this coordination and, ultimately, linkages between headquarters and field activities, the United Nations programmes should be harmonized with the needs and priorities of national Governments.

16. The Committee recommended that the regional commissions and the country offices establish mechanisms for the regular exchange of information and knowledge-sharing in areas of mutual interest, in particular poverty-eradication activities.

17. The Committee urged the regional commissions to consider how to strengthen their websites as platforms for the exchange of regional best practices and lessons learned and encouraged the Regional Commissions New York Office to continue its efforts in disseminating and sharing interregional best practices and experiences, including through the use of a joint website for that purpose.